

The Application of Politeness Principle by the Central Characters with Bipolar Disorder in the Series *Spinning Out* (2020)

Siti Nur Khofipah Lufthiana

Universitas Pakuan, Indonesia

sitinurkhofipahlufthiana@gmail.com

Abstract: This research aims to identify and analyze the utterances of the central characters that have bipolar disorder when applying politeness principle. The utterances of the central characters looks into the types of illocutionary, its function. This research uses a qualitative approach and descriptive method. This research uses Geoffrey Leech theory. This research examines only six out of ten episodes of the *Spinning Out* (2020) series which are 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 and 8. There are 17 dialogues that shows politeness principle in this research, 10 dialogues are violate the maxim of politeness and 7 dialogues are obey the maxim of politeness. The results of the research shows that in series *Spinning Out* (2020) the central characters tend to violate the politeness principle in manic phase and tend to obey the politeness principle in euthymic.

Keywords: bipolar disorder, euthymic, manic, politeness principle

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a widely discussed issue within society. Mental disorders can affect the surrounding environment due to the negative impacts because one of which is language production disorders. Individuals with mental disorders tend to use language that is not entirely appropriate when communicating with others (Mujianto, 2018).

The scientific study of language is known as linguistics. According to Kridalaksana (1983) (as cited in Effendi, 2012), linguistics is the discipline that examines the nature and intricacies of language, which serves as a medium of communication between individuals. Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on the meaning of utterances based on the context in which are used to communicate. Leech (1983) (as cited in Yuliantoro, 2019:7) states that pragmatics studies meaning in various speech situations and is more concerned with “utterance meaning” rather than “sentence meaning”.

The politeness principle is one of the aspects discussed in the study of pragmatics. Leech (1983:132) categorizes the politeness principle into six maxims: the tact maxim, the modesty maxim, the generosity maxim, the approbation maxim, the agreement maxim, and the sympathy maxim. The politeness principle involves several aspects present in speech situations, including the speaker and the hearer, the context of the utterance, and the purpose of the utterance itself. Leech (2015:20) explains that context refers to the shared background knowledge between the speaker and the hearer, which helps the hearer interpret the intended meaning.

Language serves as a means of conveying messages and meaning in every character interaction within a film. A film is defined as a motion picture or a story presented through a series of moving images, where the plot and narrative are combined. More than just moving images with a storyline, a film inherently carries meaning or an implicit message within it (Baran, 2012).

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in studying the series *Spinning Out*, which presents the issue of mental health, specifically bipolar disorder. Bipolar disorder is a mood disorder characterized by mood swings that occur without a clear cause and can interfere with the individual's emotional functioning. This condition can negatively impact social functioning and interpersonal relationships in society (Choresyo et al., 2015). According to Weiner et al. (2019), bipolar disorder is marked by speech disturbances, including pressure of speech during the manic phase and poverty of speech during the depressive phase. Bipolar disorder does not always manifest in manic or depressive episodes. Individuals can also experience a stable mood phase known as euthymia. In bipolar disorder, a euthymic mood refers to a state in which the individual has a stable mood that is neither manic nor depressed, although it can still be distinguished from the mood of a psychologically healthy person (Fava et al., 2016).

The *Spinning Out* (2020) series is an interesting subject of study because the utterances of the two central female characters, Kat Baker (the daughter) and Carol Baker (Kat's mother), both of whom suffer from bipolar disorder, are central to the narrative. In this series, bipolar disorder tends to affect the characters' language abilities. Both main characters display difficulties in communication, particularly in applying the politeness principle.

Spinning Out is a 2020 American romantic drama series created by Samantha Stratton. The series tells the story of a figure skater who struggles with family issues, romantic relationships, and a history of bipolar disorder, which she shares with her mother. Kat is a solo figure skater. In her family, Kat's younger sister, Serena, is also involved in the same sport. Their mother, Carol Baker, suffers from bipolar disorder, a condition that has also been passed down to Kat.

Based on the background above, the research questions in this study are: how the central characters with bipolar disorder apply the politeness maxims during the manic and depressive phases of bipolar disorder, and how the central characters with bipolar disorder apply the politeness maxims during the normal (euthymic) phase. The objective of this research is to identify and explain the application of the politeness principles by the central characters with bipolar disorder in the *Spinning Out* series.

Considering that bipolar disorder can affect the way individuals communicate, this study specifically highlights how the politeness principles are applied or violated by characters with bipolar disorder in the *Spinning Out* (2020) series. This study combines a pragmatic approach with the psychological aspects of the characters, which have not been widely explored in previous research. Therefore, this research is expected to provide a new contribution to the field of pragmatic linguistics, particularly in understanding the interaction between language and the psychological conditions of characters in film media.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this study is the descriptive method. The descriptive method is used by describing the dialogues of the central characters with bipolar disorder that contain the principles of politeness. The data used in this study consist of two types: primary data and secondary data.

This study uses the simak technique (observation technique) for data collection. The researcher watched the Spinning Out series and read the transcript, then noted the utterances of the central characters with bipolar disorder and their interlocutors, followed by analyzing and recording the context of the conversations containing those utterances. The data obtained from the sources were then followed by describing the context and meaning contained in the data related to the politeness principles. Subsequently, the data were concluded based on the analysis. The technique of data presentation in this study is informal. Each data point is explained using non-formal sentences. The descriptive presentation and the processed data are presented in the form of data numbers, context, dialogue excerpts, and explanation of data analysis.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

The researcher explains and identifies the speech of the central character of the bipolar disorder series Spinning Out in applying the principle of politeness when in the manic phase and normal (euthymic) phase. The principle of politeness is divided into six maxims, namely tact maxim, generosity maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, sympathy maxim and approbation maxim.

Data 1

Context: In the morning when Carol told Serena to do push-ups in the courtyard outside her house in the snowy weather. Then Kat calmed Carol down from doing that to Serena, Carol was not taking bipolar pills (lithium), which was bad for her daughter. Then she lashed out and slapped Kat.

- (1)Kat :"You stopped taking your meds."
- (2)Carol :"How dare you. After all I sacrificed? **If I hadn't gotten pregnant with you, I would've gone to the Olympics!** There's not a day, I don't think about that!"
[Ep 1, 27:12]
- (3)Kat :"I know, settle down."
- (4)Carol :"Leave me alone!"

The utterance (2) classified as an expressive utterance in the form of criticism from Carol to Kat, expressing her regrets about the past. This utterance violates the approbation maxim because it contains criticism rather than appreciation. Carol said it while she is in manic phase of bipolar disorder, which is characterized by explosive emotions, talkativeness and out of context communication.

Data 2

Context: When Kat checked her bank account to pay for the dress she bought. Her balance is missing because it was taken by her mother, Carol. Carol looks worried as she bites her thumb nail until it hurts. She saw Kat choosing her Olympic dress with Mandy, Justin's stepmother. After that, she left because she was disappointed in Kat who seemed happier with other

people, rather than Carol as her biological mother. Carol is upset with Kat and withdraws the balance from Kat's account that she was going to use to buy the costume, without telling her.

(5) Kat : "I can't believe you're actually stole from me? You took everything out of my account."

(6) Carol : "Your bank account ? it's our bank, okay? **And let's not even talk about who owes who here.** I paid for you for 18 years. Frankly, this is a drop in the bucket." [Ep 5, 13:36]

(7) Kat : "Bullshit! That was my money I've worked for months to save that up."

The utterance (6) classified as a directive utterance, it functions of requesting. Carol withdraws Kat's entire account balance without her consent. Carol asks not to talk about the debt and credit issue. Carol's utterance violates the tact maxim because Carol is only concerned with her own benefits. Carol is in the manic phase of bipolar disorder characterized by impulsive behavior , unstable emotions and difficult to control .

Data 3

Context: When Serena finished trying on the clothes, Carol had chosen for her in the fitting room, she overheard Carol and Kat's conversation about the withdrawal from Kat's account. Then, Serena argues and discusses Carol's bipolar disorder, along with Mitch's arrival. Carol tries to cover it up from Mitch because she is dating Mitch, then she is furious when Serena accidentally tells her. On the way home Carol tells Serena to get out of the car she's driving.

(8) Carol : " Get out!"

(9) Serena : "What?"

(10) Carol : "I said get out of the car!"

(11) Serena : "Mitch needed to know what he was getting into. If you keep dating him and he saw how crazy you were, you'd just end up driving him away."

(12) Carol : "**I said get out before I do something I regret!**"[Ep 5, 21:58]

The utterance (12) classified as a directive utterance, it function of commanding. Carol ordered Serena to get out of the car she was driving, because she felt annoyed with Serena. Serena accidentally talks about her bipolar disorder in front of Mitch, who is in a relationship with Carol. Carol's utterance violates the tact maxim because she increasing the interlocutor's loss by driving them away. Carol is in manic phase of bipolar disorder characterized by impulsive behavior, explosive emotions and speaking while shouting in anger.

Data 4

Context: Kat meets Carol at her workplace. Kat is going to see Marcus, then runs into Carol and she greets her. Carol doesn't take her mood stabilizer, the inevitable manic phase symptoms then have the effect of embarrassing Kat in front of public.

(13) Kat : "Mom you're having an episode. We need to leave , okay?"

(14) Carol : "Don't you dare judge me. Cause you'll never know what it's like to get dirty. Clawing your way out of the shit. How could you? You don't have the tools to succeed. **You're just a fucking loser who couldn't get over a little fall.**"
 [Ep 5, 28:32]

(15) Kat : "You're not your self right now."

(16) Carol : "At least I'm not you. You'll never be a champion. Never! All that glitters isn't gold, Kat. And you're just a little glitter."

The utterance (14) above belongs to expressive speech with the function of criticizing. Carol criticizes Kat that Kat is a loser who cannot succeed because she always loses in every championship. Carol criticizes Kat because she still seems angry because of the previous fight, then suddenly she criticizes Kat and humiliates her in public. Kat tries to calm Carol down knowing that Carol is in her manic phase. Carol's action violates the approbation maxim because it criticizes the speech partner. In this event, Carol is in the manic phase of bipolar disorder characterized by talking too much than usual, talking quickly, uncontrollable emotions and thoughts and talks that do not fit the context of the conversation.

Data 5

Context: Kat loses the Olympics and her friendship with Jenn is strained. When Kat is at work, she wants to practice ice skating, so she asks Marcus to do his job alone in the crowded restaurant. Marcus doesn't want to serve customers by himself, Kat is angry at Marcus for not letting her, then she defies him and leaves the restaurant anyway.

(17) Marcus : "Kat, where are you going?"
 (18) Kat : "I said I'd be right back. You know what? I need you to get to the rink you can cover for me right?"

(19) Marcus : "Oh, no. Actually, I can't. Hey! Kat! Looks there's 150 people the books tonight. I can't do that with server down."

(20) Kat : "Don't be so dramatic. It's one shift. And I need to skate a clean program tomorrow. **You of all people should understand that sometimes athletes have to make sacrifices.**" [Ep 7, 23:23]

The utterance (20) above belongs to directive speech with the function of requesting. Kat asks Marcus for understanding to let her train for the ice skating championship. Kat asks Marcus to understand her position as an athlete, then she insists on leaving her job when the restaurant where she works is crowded with customers. Kat's actions violate the tact maxim because Kat is more concerned with her own benefits, contrary to the maxim of tact which minimizes the speech partner's losses as little as possible. Kat is in the manic phase of bipolar disorder which can be seen from the way she says that she wants to train with great enthusiasm, as if she doesn't run out of energy, even though she is at work.

Data 6

Context: Kat and Jenn are about to start the ice skating championship. Kat greets Jenn outside the ice skating rink, as if there is no problem between them. Kat and Jenn get into an argument, and then Kat swears at Jenn to make her fall during the championship. Kat is in a manic phase of bipolar disorder when talking to Jenn, but Jenn doesn't know this.

- (21) Kat : "Hey, hey, Jenn. Wait up. Look I can't skate if you're mad at me."
- (22) Jenn : "Then don't skate."
- (23) Kat : "Can you just wear this, please? I know it's probably superstition but Justin and I-"
- (24) Jenn : "Leave me alone. I don't wanna be your friend anymore."
- (25) Kat : "**Then I hope you fucking fall.**" [Ep 7, 34:10]

The utterance (25) above belongs to expressive speech with the function of cussing. Kat's character lashed out at Jenn because Jenn was angry at Kat. Jenn thought that Kat snatched Justin from Jenn and they ended up arguing. Then, Jenn said that she didn't want to be her friend anymore, Kat who was angered cursed Jenn to fall during the Olympic championship. Kat's action violates the approbation maxim which should minimize criticism of others as much as possible. Kat is in the manic phase of bipolar disorder, characterized by explosive emotions and more energetic than usual.

Data 7

Context: In the morning Kat woke up her sister for breakfast. Then, Serena sits on the dining table chair, Kat sees her messy hair, and helps her to tie Serena's hair.

- (26) Kat : "Come here."
- (27) Serena : "Is it really bad?"
- (28) Kat : "Yeah, did you look in this mirror this morning?"
- (29) Serena : "No, am I beautiful now?"
- (30) Kat : "**Gorgeous.**" [Ep 1, 05:35]

The utterance (30) above belongs to expressive speech with the function of praising. Kat tied Serena's messy hair. Then Serena asked if she looked pretty after tying her hair and Kat praised her saying that she was pretty after she fixed her hair. Kat's action complies with the approbation maxim because Kat maximizes the praise to Serena. Kat is in the normal (euthymic) phase of bipolar disorder with no symptoms.

Data 8

Context: When Kat and Serena were at the training ground, Carol met with Mitch, Serena's coach, to apologize for Kat offending Mitch. Carol felt sorry and represented Kat to apologize for her daughter's actions.

(31) Carol :“Yeah.I just wanna make sure that Kat’s behavior hasn’t influenced Selena’s trial period. **I’m just so sorry about what happened the other night.** I can’t believe she did that.” [Ep 2, 15:39]

(32) Mitch :“No,no,no, please think nothing of it. Kat’s behaviour is no reflection on Selena.”

The utterance (31) above belongs to expressive speech with the function of apologizing. The character Carol apologizes to Mitch for Kat’s actions that cursed Mitch at the night bar. Mitch calms Carol down so she doesn’t think too much about what Kat said to her, but Carol regrets it and apologizes to Mitch for Kat’s actions. Carol’s action obeys the sympathy maxim because speakers maximize sympathy between themselves and others. Carol is in the normal (eutymic) phase of bipolar disorder with no symptoms.

Data 9

Context: When Kat was practicing surfing with Justin as a doubles player, Kat accidentally hurt Justin’s leg. When Justin lifted Kat’s body to a higher altitude, Kat began to remember the trauma she experienced, making Kat spontaneously fall and hurt Justin’s leg with her skate.

(33) Justin :“What the fuck , Kat.”

(34) Kat :“**Oh my god, I’m sorry.**” [Ep 3, 08:30]

The utterance (34) above belongs to expressive speech with the function of apologizing. The character Kat apologized to Justin because when demonstrating the jumping movement, Justin lifted Kat’s body up but Kat was reminded of her past accident. Kat fell and hurt Justin’s leg accidentally and apologized for her accident to Justin. Kat’s action obeys the sympathy maxim because it maximizes sympathy between herself and others. Kat is in the normal (eutymic) phase of bipolar disorder without symptoms.

Data 10

Context: At five o’clock in the morning, Carol told Serena to do an exercise (push ups) in the snowy courtyard of her house. Kat, who was outside the house, went to the yard and helped her sister to stop doing what her mother told her to do.

(35) Kat :“You okay?”

(36) Serena :“I think I re-sprained my wrist.”

(37) Kat :“**Go inside, put some ice on it.** Take a shower, get into bed. I’ll call Dr. Parker in the morning. I’ll back to check in you ok?” [Ep 1, 28:08]

The utterance (37) above belongs to directive speech with the function of commanding. Kat ordered Serena to go inside the house and stop her activities. Serena felt that she had sprained her wrist due to her mother’s action of telling her to do push-ups in the courtyard of her house in the morning with snowy weather conditions. Kat’s action obeys the tact maxim,

because the speaker minimizes the speech partner's loss as little as possible. Kat is in the normal (euthymic) phase of bipolar disorder without symptoms.

CONCLUSION

The main characters in the *Spinning Out* series tend to violate the politeness principles during the manic phase of bipolar disorder, marked by impulsive, emotional, and contextually inappropriate speech. In contrast, during the normal (euthymic) phase, they are more likely to follow the politeness maxims. Out of 17 utterances analyzed, 10 showed violations and 7 showed adherence to the maxims. The most frequent violations occurred in the maxims of tact and approbation. This study highlights that psychological conditions significantly influence language use and the application of politeness in communication.

DAFTAR PUSTAKA

Baran, Stanley J., Hayati, Yayat Sri, Maulana, Adi, Hasfi, Nurul. (2012). *Pengantar Komunikasi Massa: Melek Media & Budaya* (Ed. 5 Jilid 2). Jakarta: Erlangga.

Choresyo, B., Nulhaqim, S. A., & Wibowo, H. (2015). KESADARAN MASYARAKAT TERHADAP PENYAKIT MENTAL. *Prosiding Penelitian Dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 2(3), 381–387. <https://doi.org/10.24198/jppm.v2i3.13587>

Frandika, E., & Idawati, I. (2020). Tindak Tutur Ilokusi dalam Film Pendek “Tilik (2018)”. *Pena Literasi*, 3(2), 61-69.

Giovanni A. Fava, Per Bech; The Concept of Euthymia. *Psychother Psychosom* 1 January 2016; 85 (1): 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000441244>

Leech, G.(1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Routledge.

Leech, G. (2014). *The Pragmatics of Politeness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Leech, G. (2015). Prinsip-Prinsip Pragmatik (M.D.D Oka, Penerjemah). Jakarta: Penerbit Universitas Indonesia (UI-Press).

Mujianto, G. (2018). Analisis Wacana Kritis Pemberitaan Tentang Ormas Islam pada Situs Berita Online. *KEMBARA: Jurnal Keilmuan Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya*, 4(2), 155-172.

Pamungkas, G. A. (2019, November). GANGGUAN PRODUKSI DAN KOMPREHENSIF UJARAN PADA PENDERITA DEPRESI. In *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia (SENASBASA)* (Vol. 3, No. 2), 45-52.

Weiner, L., Doignon-Camus, N., Bertschy, G., & Giersch, A. (2019). Thought and language disturbance in bipolar disorder quantified via process-oriented verbal fluency measures. *Scientific Reports*, 9(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-50818-5>